



VA COMMUNITY **PLAYBOOK**

A collection of practices for building effective and sustainable community coalitions with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA); federal and state services; community stakeholders and service providers

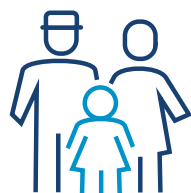
VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Veterans Experience Office



OUR PURPOSE



VETERANS EXPERIENCE OFFICE COMMUNITY PLAYBOOK EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Welcome to the Community Playbook!

The development of the Community Playbook began with the observation that despite achieving progress in providing services to Service members, Veterans and their families, caregivers, and survivors; gaps remain. An essential part of delivering on our promise is community involvement and leadership. A complex set of factors may limit Veteran access to services. These can include perceptions of one's own mental health, motivation, stigma, distrust, and attitudes for seeking treatment. External barriers may include lack of awareness about eligibility, services and how to access them, and lack of input or support from others. More outreach efforts are needed to overcome these obstacles.

Overall, engaged communities can act as a force multiplier to serve Service members, Veterans and their families, caregivers, and survivors. Developing and harnessing the strengths of communities, organizations and coalitions are crucial to meeting their needs. It is our hope that these strategies will help to build supportive and collaborative communities. Together, VA in partnership with Veteran-serving organizations and community coalitions, can more effectively and efficiently serve Service members, Veterans and their families, caregivers, and survivors.

The Community Playbook focuses on three overarching strategies to guide readers:



VA's Veterans Experience Office (VEO) collaborated with organizational partners to create a collection of practices for building effective and sustainable community coalitions. The VA Community Playbook offers Veteran serving organizations and communities a variety of best practices and promising practices to connect, serve, and engage Service members, Veterans and their families, caregivers, and survivors. Guidance includes coalition-building practices for those just beginning and those who have already developed a coalition in their community.





FOR COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS

How to Use the Playbook

VEO stands ready to support you. Whether you're a Veteran advocate, stakeholder, Veteran serving organization, community coalition/board, federal/state/county or public-private entity, the VA Community Playbook gives you the tools needed to build and/or sustain a successful Veteran-friendly community with a built-in coordinated, support system that is localized, needs-based, and outcome-driven.

As with any effort, certain key elements exist that maximize the opportunity for positive impact. There are many levers to utilize that drive change, relevance, and prioritization. It is important to make adaptations to fit your particular environment to allow the best chance for successful community engagement.

For All Community Levels

If you're just starting out or you're already a part of a well-established Veteran community, the playbook includes resources for all levels. Within the playbook, you'll find three symbols indicating information useful at different levels.



Beginner

Just starting to form a coalition or community collaborative and getting to know their community.



Intermediate

A coalition or collaborative is formed and starting to meet, identify community issues and solutions, and host community events to increase access to VA and community services.



Advanced

Advanced coalitions or collaboratives are those that are fully mature, effectively referring Veterans, families, caregivers, and survivors to needed services, tracking data, innovating, and have secured a funding source to sustain.



PREPARING



Know the Community Ecosystem

Understand the needs of the community, identify the stakeholders, and how to actualize opportunities while minimizing risk.



Build the Coalition

Identify diverse, like-minded thinkers and influencers.



INTEGRATING



Identify Key Elements

Select any combination of practices to maximize positive impact within your organization.



Adapt and Adopt

Incorporate and adapt promising practices from private sector, across government and non-profit agencies.



EXECUTING



Sequence and Execute

Align key elements in an order that matches community readiness to support the needed development time and engagement with appropriate organizations.



COMMUNITY PLAYBOOK CONTENT



Building Your Community

Build a Community Coalition or Community Veteran Engagement Board

Development Time:



**6-12
Months**

Organizational Level:



**Community
Organization**

- Establishing a coalition or a Community Veteran Engagement Board can unite a community to serve SMVF, caregivers and survivors. Key elements to building or leveraging a coalition include being inclusive, accessible, community-driven, flexible, and integrated into local resources.
- Strategies involve working with leaders at every level of community leadership and collaborating to measure progress and make data-driven decisions.



Expanding Your Collaboration

VA Resources for Community Leaders and Effective Communications

Development Time:



On-going

Organizational Level:



**Community
VA Support**

- Ongoing efforts to collaborate with VA and other organizations with shared missions can serve to enhance coalition growth. VA's VEO can serve in a consulting capacity to support these community efforts. One way to expand collaboration is to hold a Virtual Veteran Experience Action Event. These events can assist Veterans with claims and increase access to health, education, employment, legal and health services.
- Utilizing effective communication techniques is important for expanding a coalition's ability to reach other potential partners. This includes using local VA public affairs, social media, radio, news, and other governmental platforms.



Amplifying and Sustaining Your Impact

Partnerships and Networking, Innovation and Funding/Grants

Development Time:



**6-12
Months**

Organizational Level:



Community

- Using a digital platform can enhance a coalition's ability to manage a referral process, coordinate with health and benefits service providers, manage activities, as well as document and support case management. Digital platforms allow coalitions to better track their own metrics, which can drive innovation and better positions a coalition to sustain efforts through federal, state and other grant funding opportunities.
- Coalitions can also amplify their impact by fostering partnerships in the community with those in existing networks. Partnering with Veteran Service Organizations (VSOs), non-profit and for-profit entities can act as force multipliers to improve the lives of SMVF, caregivers and survivors in a coalition's community.

Building Your Community												
			Expanding Your Collaboration									
						Amplifying & Sustaining						
JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	

**Stages of supporting your community can vary over time,
with no one-size-fits-all model for any community.**

BEFORE GETTING STARTED



Knowing What You Do Know

Understanding your community, its constraints and its levers is critical to understanding how to identify and implement unmet needs of a community. If you're just getting started, contact other community providers and your VA facility representatives to help you navigate community and federal/state resources to execute, scale, and sustain initiatives.



Knowing What You Don't Know

Building a sustainable community support system is not easy and may not move in a linear pattern. Be flexible in the process, building coalitions and relationships are complex and take time to establish.

Many community promising practices are gleaned from research. It's important to know what sources to trust and how to adapt this research to fit their unique culture and community needs.





THE COMMUNITY CATEGORIES

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COMMUNITY COALITIONS ^B

Build a community coalition, collaborative, or CVEB

Development Time:



**4-6
Months**

Organizational Level:



**Community
Organization**

Key Elements when Building or Leveraging a Coalition



- **Inclusive**—open to all Veterans, families, caregivers and survivors



- **Accessible**—create public forums, virtually and in-person, to open lines of communication



- **Community-driven**—focus on local issues guided by the local groups that understand them



- **Flexible**—allow for agility and customization to meet local needs



- **Integrated**—connect with local resources, VA facilities, State VA and community advocacy groups/VSOs



Learn more about coalitions on YouTube by
searching 'CVEB' to see examples!

youtube.com/results?search_query=CVEB

Promising Practices



Community Leadership: Make the case to build or leverage an existing community coalition with leaders in the community to solve Veteran challenges and improve Veterans' experiences at the local level. The coalition should include public/private entities, academia, VSOs and Veteran serving Organizations, federal/state agencies, and service providers. Executive leadership should be working in tandem with the 'doer' leadership to engage at all angles.



Leverage a Catalyst or Backbone organization to drive effective community engagement by collaborating with existing Veteran organizations and advocates in the community.



Engagement: Foster partnerships in the community with leaders in the Veteran advocacy space and Veteran serving organizations. Liaise closely with Department of Veterans Affairs local experts at the VA medical center, regional benefits office and nearest cemetery to include the State Department of Veterans Affairs. Establish a monthly or quarterly cadence of meetings to identify needs in the community and brainstorm solutions to meet challenges. Provide meeting flexibility by creating hybrid environments, mixing in-person and virtual engagements using lessons learned during the pandemic.



Programming, Planning Budget, Execution: Plan for community engagement initiatives in the short, medium, and long term along with budgetary needs.



Measuring Progress: Incorporate tangible data-driven outcomes into the community strategy to track performance and share promising practices. Types of data to collect include Veterans experience data (ease, effectiveness, emotional resonance, trust), operational data, outreach and engagement metrics, referrals and issues resolved.



Impact: Demonstrate a clear return on investment, performance improvements and share stories locally and nationally to highlight impact.



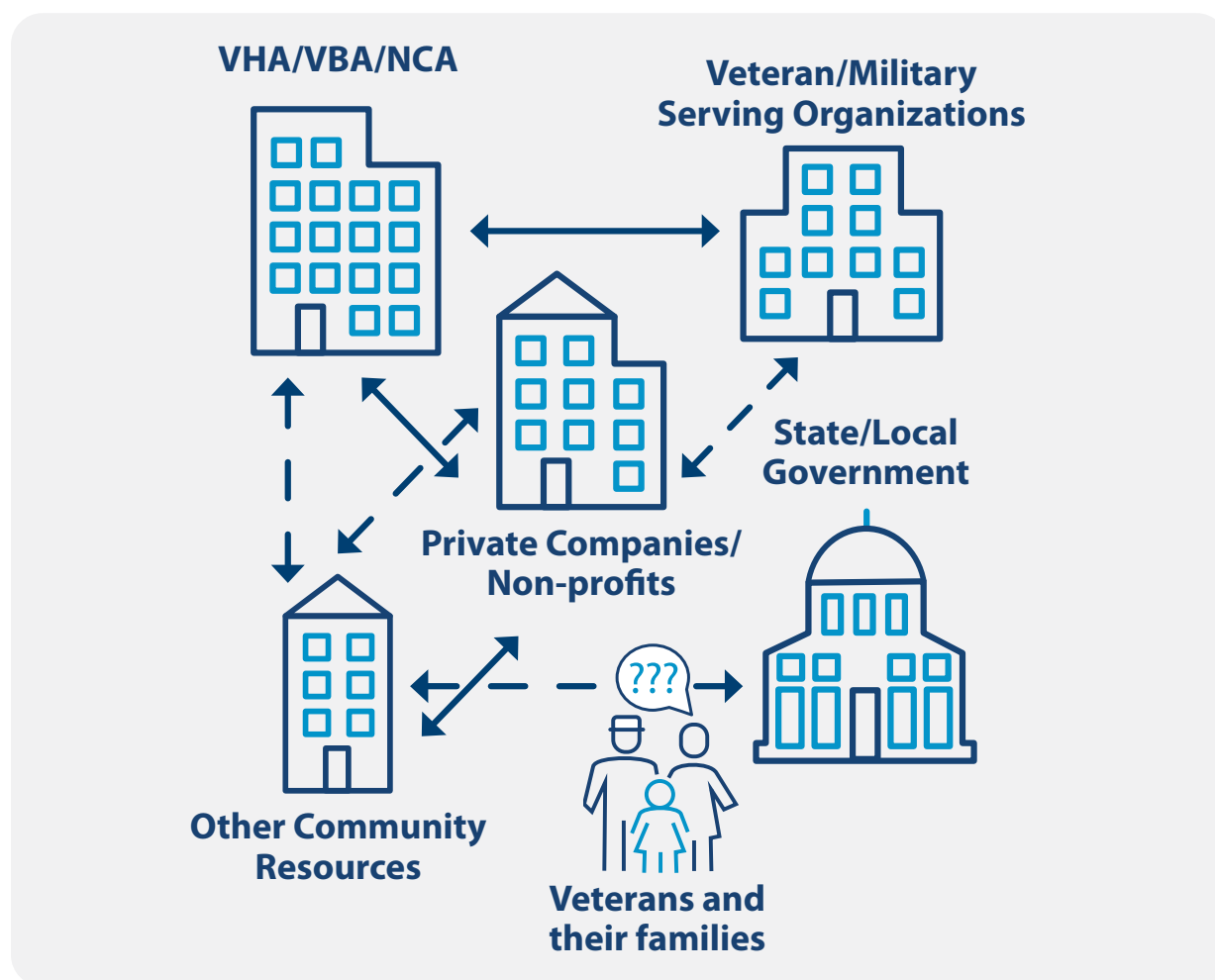
Trust: Improving access to VA's resources starts with listening to the voice of the Veteran community, then using that feedback to design VA customer experiences that are easy, effective, and delivered with empathy.



UNDERSTANDING THE VALUE OF COALITIONS ^B

No Established Community Collaborative or Coalition

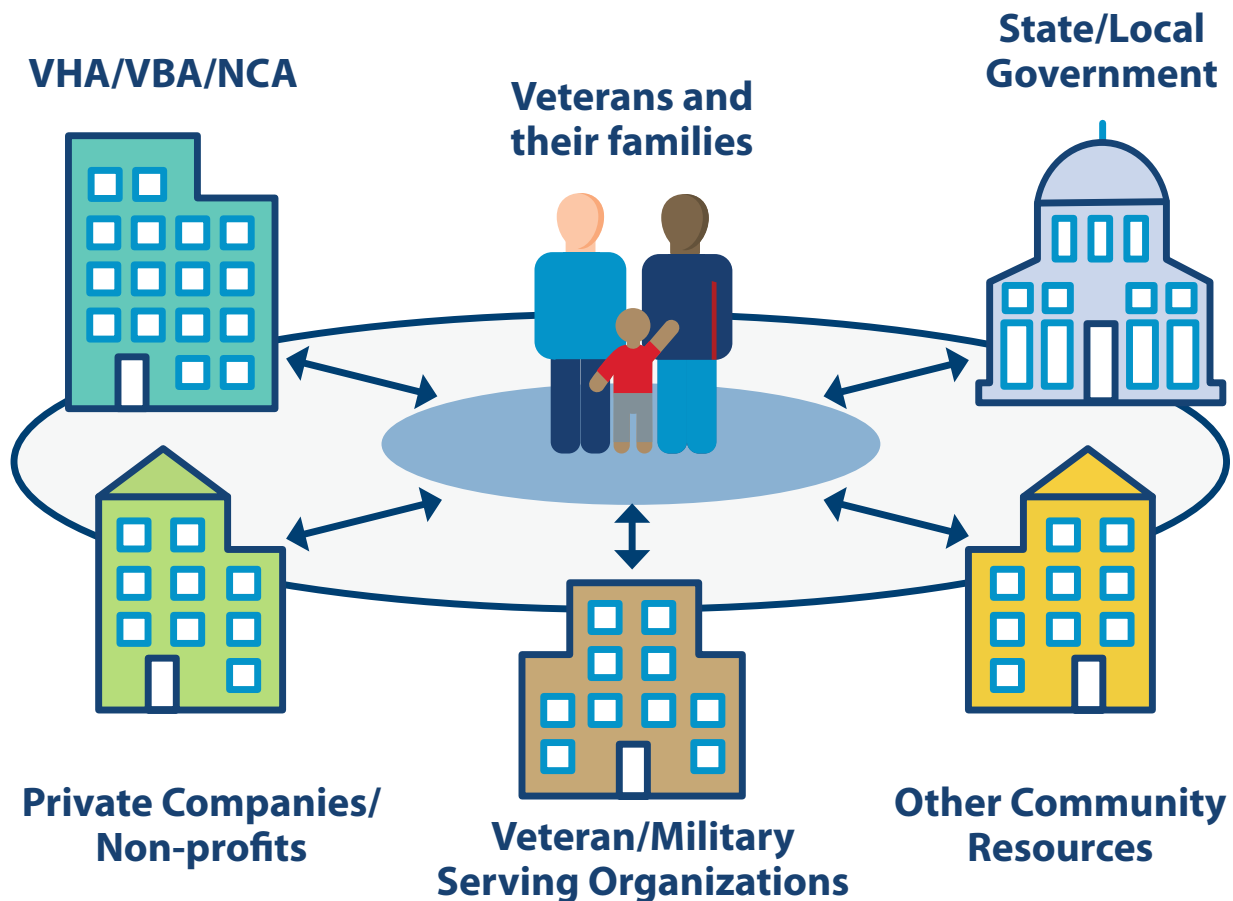
In communities *without* coordinated, community-based support to transitioning Service members, Veterans, their families, caregivers, and survivors, service may be disjointed and confusing.



Types of Community Collaboratives include, but not limited to, Community Veterans Engagement Boards (CVEBs) and Veteran Community Partnerships (VCPs).

Community Collaborative Model

In a Community Collaborative Model, board members meet regularly amongst themselves and with the community through “public forums” which are inclusive and integrated.



Other types of evidence-informed community partnership building practices:

- Informal weekly community gatherings:
[Veteran Outreach Into the Community to Expand Social Support](#)
- Suicide prevention coalition-building:
[VA and Communities Support Challenge to Prevent Veteran Suicide](#)
- VA and community care transitions and access:
[Veteran Community Partnerships](#)
- DoD Building Healthy Military Communities:
[About Building Healthy Military Communities](#)



COMMUNITY COALITIONS ^B

Available tools & templates

This playbook and other tools are available to VA and community leaders to provide a framework and philosophy for sparking these community movements.

Why are community coalitions and CVEBs important?

Coalitions allow for consistency in a community's approach to addressing health and systemic issues. Consistency is imperative when addressing a community issue, especially if there are multiple organizations and individuals are already working on the same issue.

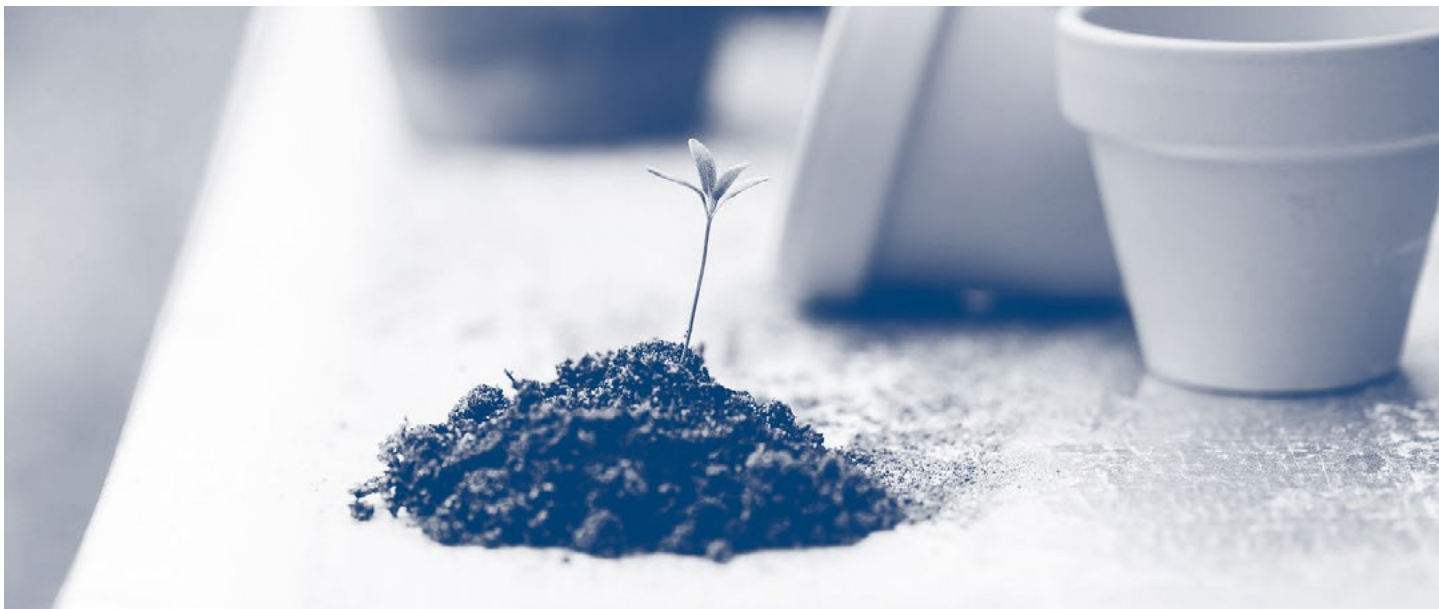
Common strengths for effective coalitions include:

- diversity
- well-defined roles
- established goals and resources
- decision-making
- and ability to mobilize the community.

Coalitions and collaboratives should reach out to diverse groups to make sure that all Veterans, especially those who may have been marginalized and disenfranchised, are included in coalition building efforts.

Examples of successful community partnerships:

- VA News–[CVEBs](#)
- The Hill–[Veterans need 'friendly' communities to adjust to civilian life](#)
- MIT Hackathons–[MakeMIT 2022](#)
- Rideshare–[The Rideshare Company: Ridesharing & Commuter Programs](#)



Tools:

- [Access resources](#) to engage your Veteran community.
- View State Department of Veterans Affairs [office locations](#).



Success Practices:

- Learn about [proven methods](#) to enhance your community engagement.



CVEB Map:

- Find local [CVEB](#) networks and points of contact.



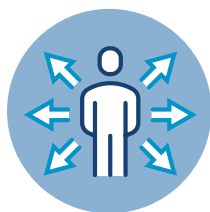
Veteran Friendly Communities:

- Learn more about establishing [Veteran friendly communities](#) through coalition building and CVEBs.



Learn about proven methods enhance your community engagement.

■ [CVEB Toolkit](#)



FINDING VETERAN DATA

VA Data Reports

- [VA National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics NCVAS Pocket Cards](#)
- [National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics](#)
- [Point-in-Time \(PIT\) Count](#)
- [Veteran Suicide Data and Reporting](#)

Other Partner Data Reports

- [PSU Veteran Network](#)
- [The Got Your 6 Network: Quantifying and Addressing Veterans' Needs](#)
- [Military Family Lifestyle Survey 2022](#)
- [RAND Epstein Family Veterans Policy Research Institute](#)
- [Institute for Veterans & Military Families \(IVMF\) Digital Library](#)
- [Census Bureau Data](#)



Veteran
Population



Reports



State
Summaries



Maps



Expenditures



Utilization



Surveys



Pocket Cards



VETERAN ADMINISTRATION COLLABORATION IA

Obtaining support from the Department of Veterans Affairs

Development Time:



On-going

Organizational Level:



Local VA
Facility

VA Available Tools:

- Veterans Experience Action Centers (VEACs)
- Veterans Experience Live (VetXL) Q&A Chat (typed virtual chat-no audio)
- VA listening sessions and human-centered design methodology
- Survey feedback mechanisms
- #VetResources Newsletter state or local targeted outreach
- Engage with the Mayor's/Governor's Challenge



What is the Governor's and Mayor's Challenge?

The goal of these challenges is to reduce suicides among Service members, Veterans and their families using a public health approach to suicide prevention. There are currently 52 states and territories taking part in the challenge, working to develop and implement state-wide suicide prevention promising practices.



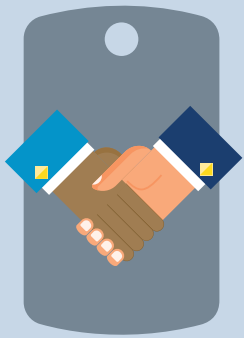
Tools

[VEACs](#) help those across the country

VetXL [FAQ](#)

Locate local VA Crisis Resources [here](#)

VEO [Human-Centered Design](#)



Engage frontline VA staff! While having buy-in from a VA regional or hospital director should always be the goal, often times the most effective relationships to build with VA will be a combination of those on the frontline and the leadership teams. Having an engaged VA team involved will be much more effective than only having the VA director attend meetings.

Engage with local VA officials starting with Director-level and including the VA Public Affairs Officer and middle management to ensure an action-oriented, data-driven approach to engagement with the local coalition or CVEB. This can be frustrating if you are not getting a response from your local VA, please let VEO help with that by emailing VAVEOCommunications@va.gov for a warm introduction.

VA's Veterans Experience Office (VEO) serves in a consulting capacity to support the local community, build coalitions, network and provide the tools needed to be successful and sustain an effective Veteran-friendly Community. VEO is ready to support the community through engagement with local VA facilities, feedback mechanisms, and training with VA offices to support local communities with hosting VEACs. To connect with VEO, email VAVEOCommunications@va.gov.

Identify VA subject matter experts needed to be successful in community engagement:

- VA Medical Centers-
[Find VA Locations | Veterans Affairs](#)
- VA Regional Benefits Office-
[Regional Offices Websites-Veterans Benefits Administration \(va.gov\)](#)
- VA National Cemetery-
[National Cemetery Listing-National Cemetery Administration \(va.gov\)](#)
- Other subject matter experts focused on specific needs in the community (*i.e.*, Vet Center, suicide prevention coordinator, homelessness or caregiver coordinator)
- Office Locations-
[State Department of Veterans Affairs](#)



VETERAN ADMINISTRATION COLLABORATION I A

Get your VA Go-To's!

Steps to Connect with Local VA Leadership



It is important you have strong, accessible community coalition leadership, key community partners, goals, and meeting cadence before engaging VA leadership. They will want to know that you are established and what your community coalition can do to fill gaps in VA services.



When inviting VA leadership and staff into your community coalition, a direct approach is best. Find VA directors by checking staff directories in your location. If you are unable to reach a director, try to connect with public affairs or someone in community outreach.



Request a time to meet—in person if you can—and take time to get to know their priorities and share your own. Creating opportunities for discussion and understanding will help to determine what you want your partnership to look like.



Not sure where to start in your community?

Visit va.gov/find-locations

VA is focused on community engagement and community coalitions are an important piece of their outreach strategy. It is important to understand that this is a two-way relationship and your members—VA or not—will want you to put in the same level of effort they contribute.

Who are your VA go-to's?

Once you have established your relationship, they can connect you to other staff members who can help with education and direct Veteran support. Outside of directors, community coalitions also value connections to:

Veterans Health Administration (VHA)

- Public officers
- Veteran Experience Officers
- Focused population support staff such as women Veteran health, minority and LGBTQ+ Veteran coordinators
- Behavioral health support staff such as suicide prevention coordinators, social workers, and substance abuse program staff

Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA)

- Compensation service for disability program staff
- Supportive housing (HUD VASH) program staff
- Veteran Readiness & Employment (VR&E, previously VocRehab) program staff

National Cemetery Administration (NCA)

- Public affairs officers are rare in NCA, but they do exist at larger cemeteries Vet Centers
- Vet Centers Outreach Program Specialists (VOPs)

When working with VA, it is helpful for community coalitions to:

- Be quick to respond to requests from VA to support Veteran referrals.
- Match the diversity and needs of the community in structure and intention.
- Focus on outcomes and accountability.
- Reminder: Uncovering VA system issues or glitches is helpful, but always remember to be respectful of one another. Everyone at the table is focused on improving the lives of Veterans.



VETERAN ADMINISTRATION COLLABORATION



Get your VA go-to's

Development Time:

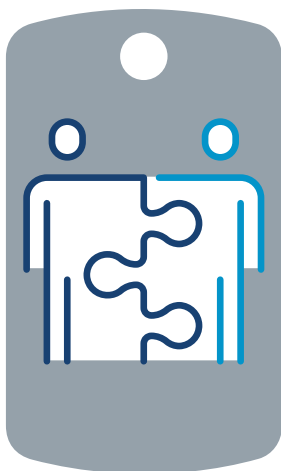


**4-6
Months**

Organizational Level:



**Community
VA Support**



Understanding how VA can support your community coalition and what VA will expect from you is key to creating a productive and mutually beneficial relationship.

Involving directors and staff from VHA, VBA, NCA, and Vet Centers are important to your growth to create a lasting partnership to address Veteran issues in your community. While every relationship is different, it is important to be aware of common activities that strong community coalitions prioritize and understand some of VA's limitations to create a successful partnership.

Access, Attention, and Action

- Communication is not limited to meetings; both community coalition leadership and VA contacts should be accessible for emergent needs.
- VA representatives may have limited availability, be aware of that and work with them to set realistic expectations for a successful partnership. Work with them to set realistic expectations.
- Care and accountability should be prioritized when Veteran contacts are referred to appropriate subject matter experts for support.

Meetings and Guidance

- Standing meetings are important for VA leadership and staff to attend. When VA leadership is unavailable, they will often send another staff member in their place.
- Make time at meetings for updates from the VA administrations and for other members to ask question about VA benefits and services.
- When you need a VA expert to educate your coalition or the community at-large, coordinate with the appropriate VA connection as early as possible.
- Remember: VA leadership and staff should be considered members, not leaders. You and your other partners are responsible for setting meetings and the agenda.

Building Connections

- While it is recommended to connect first to VA administration directors, your key VA point of contact will depend on the needs of your community. You may find that another VA staff member can offer the attention, connection, and action you need.
- No matter your go-to, they can help connect you with other staff within their administration that can meet Veteran and community needs.
- Talk to your VA point of contact, and see if they have other connections in the community that may help fill gaps in your community coalition membership. They may be able to connect you with partners to help fill gaps in your community coalition membership.
- Remember: Be sure to regularly ask about any staffing changes that might impact your community coalition and work with VA to transition new members into the fold

Event support

- VA values Veteran-centric events in the community and may be able to help share information about your events through email, social media platforms, and with the media.
- Attending events and being visible in the community is important for VA. Even if your community VA point of contact cannot participate, they will likely be able to offer an alternative representative.
- Encourage sharing calendars to make coordinating the next big community activity easier.
- Remember: VA leadership and staff are unlikely have the bandwidth to help organize events and it is not easy for VA staff to travel. Keep distance in mind when planning events.

Additional limitations to consider

- VA cannot provide funding for a community coalition.
- Look to non-VA partners for support on requests that conflict with VA mandates or policies.



VETERAN ADMINISTRATION COLLABORATION



Veterans Experience Action Center quick start guide



What is a VEAC? Learn more [here!](#)

Veterans Experience Action Centers, or VEACs, continue to improve outcomes for Veterans, family members, caregivers and survivors across the Nation. The program was established to proactively assist Veterans in a selected state with a one-stop resource for all their needs.

Veterans Experience Action Center (VEAC) events are a collaborative effort which include representation from VHA, VBA, NCA, Board of Veterans' Appeals, State Departments of Veterans Affairs and community partners working together to offer one-on-one personalized assistance for:

- VA benefits
- VA health care
- Crisis resources
- Memorial affairs
- Community services
- Peer-to-peer connection

Service members, Veterans, their families, caregivers and survivors select their preferred date and time and then make an appointment online to connect to the VEAC. A local Veteran Service Officer initiates the appointment by calling the registrant. The appointment is executed over the phone in a virtual environment.



What type of assistance is the Veteran offered?

During the VEAC event, Veterans can obtain assistance with:

- VA claims and appeals status and filings
- VA health care eligibility and enrollment
- VA and state-specific Veterans benefits
- Family member, caregiver, and survivor services
- Community support network referrals
- Education, employment, and pro bono legal referrals



How is a VEAC marketed?

VA communication specialists join forces with State, community, and strategic partners to market the VEAC to Service members, Veterans, family members, caregivers, and survivors. Marketing starts four weeks prior to the VEAC with the dissemination of an event flyer, targeted emails, and traditional and social media outreach. All outreach is targeted, via zip codes, to known Veterans in an area. VA can also target to underserved populations and areas with low rates of VA utilization.



What is the cost of a VEAC?

The cost to execute a VEAC event will vary based on the number of Veterans to be served. Please schedule a consultation with the VEO team to discuss your proposed event by emailing [vet-friendlycommunities@va.gov](mailto:veterfriendlycommunities@va.gov).

To obtain the complete Virtual VEAC Quick Start Guide, or to connect with your local VHA, VBA, and NCA for more VEAC information, send a request to:

Vet-FriendlyCommunities@va.gov





EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

Using effective communication



Development Time:



On-going

Organizational Level:



Community
VA Support

Effective communications at the community level is not about creating, but rather collaborating. Be the bridge to bring it all together.

Key Actions to Get Started

- Create a website to act as a hub (free example: Wix.com/Weebly.com)
- Create a newsletter and start collecting e-mails (free example: Mailchimp.com/GetResponse.com)
- Contact your local VA facility public affairs to include VA updates in your newsletter
- Work with your local County Veteran Service Office to collaborate on communications
- Use your local paper and radio to broadcast events and information
- Find another Veteran community to ask about their best practices with communication

How to Evaluate Effective Communication

<https://www.wikihow.com/Measure-the-Effectiveness-of-Communication>



Learn more by watching this Webinar!

How to Improve Communication Skills-7 Tips

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mPRUNGGORDo>

Access VA's social media networks using the icons below:



[Facebook](#)



[Instagram](#)



[Twitter](#)



[YouTube](#)



[Reddit](#)



[LinkedIn](#)



[RallyPoint](#)



[VA News](#)

VA Tools

- VA's VEO team may be able to you help communicate to Veterans in your region
- Submit a [VA Guest Blog](#)
- Submit a no-cost Veteran, family, caregiver, or survivor event to [VA Mailbox](#)

VA Facility Map

- Find your VA [Point-of-Contact](#)



Don't go all in on social media right away!

Social media pages are a great way to grow, but not at first. The most effective way to grow an audience is via an e-mail newsletter. Social media sites limit your reach without paying them, but a newsletter lets you connect with your subscribers every time.



VETRESOURCES COMMUNITY NETWORK (VRCN)

Expand collaboration by Joining the VRCN and Community of Practice

Veteran Support Networks



VHA Veteran Community Partnerships



DOD Building Healthy Military Communities



Community Veterans Engagement Boards (CVEBs)



Strategic Partners



State Offices/NASDVA Governors/Mayors Challenge County VSO



Community of Practice



TOOLS

- Crowd-sourcing idea platform to invite feedback, discussion, and establish priorities both locally and nationally
- CSignals to measure the Veteran Community Experience
- Community Challenge Competitions, including scalable Veteran community solutions



CONNECTIONS

- Community Mentoring Program to connect coalitions, reduce duplication, and maximize impact
- National Workshops, including guest speakers (VA and non-VA) best practices, and Community Playbook Deep Dives
- Regional Workshops, including smaller breakout sessions focused on regional connections
 - Example: M85, VCATs
 - Transferable practices



ADVICE

- VEO Community Advisors
- Community Mentoring Program, including best practices from other networks and Community Playbook Walkthroughs
- Building relationships with local VA facilities
- Establishing community goals

Join the VRCN!

Connecting Veterans to Resources and Reaching Underserved Communities



Unenrolled Veteran

Veterans are enrolled in needed VA services thanks to improved navigation via strong Veteran communities.



Enrolled Veteran

Veterans are currently receiving VA services and need assistance with navigation and accessing other VA and community resources.



VetResources Community Network

A strong Veteran community pulls in Veterans and recommends resources such as VA and partners.



VA Services

VA bolsters VRCN with tools, advice, and connections to build stronger Veteran communities.

Community Enablers



VEACs/
VetXLs



Veteran
Identifier
Survey



Veteran
Community Data



Caregiver
Networks



Academic
Partners



#VetResources



Community
of Practice



VOICES
Socials



Community-Based
Interventions for
Suicide Prevention*



Pathfinder

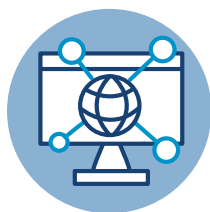


VR Community
Idea Lab

*includes Governor's/Mayor's challenge, Together with Veterans, and CEPC/PMs



Join the VRCN today and get support through our CoP!
To join, please email VEO at VAVEOCommunications@va.gov.



DIGITAL PLATFORM **B I A**

Use of digital platform to manage referrals,
coordination, and activities

Development Time:



**6-12
Months**

Organizational Level:



Community

Engagement with IT companies and other organizations for off the shelf product use to manage a referral process, coordinate with health and benefits service providers, manage activities, document, and support case management is essential for a successful community support system and coalition. There is no one size fits all model, however some platforms have illustrated more success in some communities than others.

Key Elements for Digital Platform:

- Referral process
- Coordination and service delivery capability
- Activities repository
- Survey and feedback mechanism
- Document storage
- Case management
- Crisis Intervention mechanism
- Email capability
- Security
- Peer support referrals
- Care navigation
- Real time feedback loop
- Data gathering
- E-screening ability



Learn more by watching this Webinar!

What is a Digital Platform?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1aVBp1dFG2Q>



PARTNERSHIPS & NETWORKING



Identify effective partnerships and network to build outreach capacity and achieve collective impact

Development Time:



**4-6
Months**

Organizational Level:



**Community
Organization**



What is a force multiplier?

Force multiplier is a combination of factors that when used together give a significant increase in impact potential.



What is collective impact?

Collective impact is bringing people together in a structured way to achieve change under a common agenda.

Partner Options and Examples

- State Departments of Veterans Affairs [Office Locations](#)
- [VA VEO Partnerships](#)
- VA Health Related [Partnership Examples](#)
- [National Resource Directory](#) | Connecting our Service Members & Veterans
- [PATRIOTlink](#)



Learn more by watching this Webinar!
Network for Greater Collaboration

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x4foFFXlazzk>



Foster partnerships in the community with those in your existing networks who are leaders in the Veteran advocacy space to include non-profit and for-profit entities that can act as force multipliers. Liaise closely with VSOs to attend local and national convenings and conventions to build relationships and outreach. Engage with organizations working towards similar goals and brainstorm new solutions to improve Veteran experiences. Lean-in towards community events where data can be gathered on if VA services are being used and if not, establish a mechanism by which those Veterans can be referred to VA for care and benefits. Establish a monthly or quarterly cadence of convenings to identify community needs with solutions to meet challenges.

Key Partner Engagements

- VA subject matter experts (health, benefits and memorial affairs)
- Non-Profits 501(c)(3)—(Social Service Organizations)
- Private (for-profits)
- State/county (State DVA and county service officers)
- Federal (Department of Labor, Health and Human Services, Department of Education)
- Academia (colleges/universities)
- Faith-based (clergy/chaplains)
- Philanthropic (charities)
- Veteran treatment courts
- Homeless shelters
- Food pantries
- Other academic affiliated medical facilities



PARTNERSHIPS & NETWORKING ^A

Establishing VA memorandums of agreement and cooperative research and developing agreements



What is a MOA?

A MOA is a non-binding, non-monetary agreement between two entities annotating what each organization will do in partnership for the Veteran community. There is no monetary exchange and may be 1-3 years in length with option years.



Three Ways to Partner with VA

Provide in-kind services, products, or support to a VA project, program, or event.



Donate money to a VA project, service, event, or other support program.



Provide services, products, or support free to Veterans through a VA program.



What is a CRADA?

A CRADA is an agreement established pursuant to **15 U.S.C. §3710a** between VA and one or more non-Federal and/or Federal parties under which VA may accept, retain and use funds, personnel, services, facilities, intellectual property, equipment, or other resources from the other partner.



Cultivate partnerships in the community with those in your existing networks who are leaders in the Veteran advocacy space to include non-profit and for-profit entities that can act as force multipliers.

Liaise closely with VSOs to attend local and national convenings and conventions to build relationships and outreach.

Engage with organizations working towards similar goals and brainstorm new solutions to improve Veteran experiences.

Lean-in towards community events where data can be gathered on if VA services are being used and if not, establish a mechanism by which those Veterans can be referred to VA for care and benefits.

Establish a monthly or quarterly cadence of convenings to identify community needs with solutions to meet challenges.

Partnerships come in many forms, ranging from informal outreach to pilot programming and service delivery. Partnerships build capacity, improve Veterans experiences, fill gaps, leverage resources, address new and emerging needs, and build on the experiences and knowledge of our community and strategic partners. In some cases, a formal partnership with VA is needed and there are a few types to consider to build capacity with VA at your side.

- Memorandums of Agreement (MOA)
- Cooperative Research and Development Agreement (CRADA)

Promising practices in partnership establishment and operationalization (from national to local implementation) fall into the following **categories**:

- Partnership is addressing a gap or need that your organization cannot address alone
- Partnership must tie back to enabling the community to better serve Veterans
- Find out how partners share information, outreach, and engage
- Work with partners at national, federal, state, and local level



INNOVATION ^A

Get involved and lean forward

Development Time:



6-18
Months

Organizational Level:



Community



What is Challenge.gov?

[Challenge.gov](https://challenge.gov), managed by the General Services Administration, is a leading program that supports federal agencies to mature and scale the use of prize competitions in order to advance their missions. Through this website, federal agencies can engage public solvers in challenges and prize competitions (together referred to as “prize competitions”) to identify innovative solutions to critical issues.

Get Involved

- Visit [Challenge.gov](https://challenge.gov) and [subscribe](#) to receive information about prize competitions, or to access [resources](#)
- [Federal Register](#)
- [VA Federal Advisory Committees](#)
- [GSA Schedule](#)
- Learn more about the [VHA Innovation Ecosystem](#)



Learn more by watching this Webinar!
Ideas About Innovation (ted.com)

<https://www.ted.com/topics/innovation>

Key Elements to Innovation

- Data-driven approach
- Customer-centered
- Outcomes focused
- Innovative thinking
- Solution oriented

Think outside the box! Engage in forward thinking, progressive, and innovative actions! Consider responding to or participating in the following:

- Community calls-to-action
- Community challenge competitions
- Requests for information (RFIs)
- Public register notices
- VA Federal Advisory Committee Board Member
- Brainstorming sessions to solve community challenges
- Gain adequate understanding of GSA schedule and contracting with Federal Government

Other Innovative Tools

Data-Driven Approach: [Determining the Right Data Tool for Your Community-Based Partnership](#)

Outcomes Focused: [The Outcome-Driven Approach to Innovation | Digital Insights | Kin + Carta \(kinandcarta.com\)](#)

Innovative Thinking: [3 Strategies for Developing Innovative Thinking \(forbes.com\)](#)

Solutions: [The Four Fundamentals of Solution Innovation \(cprime.com\)](#)





PATHFINDER INNOVATING WITH VA

Explore the different ways of innovating with VA



Development Time:



On-going

Organizational Level:



Community
Organization



What is Pathfinder?

Pathfinder allows an opportunity for VA to move forward in vendor engagements in a way that is unprecedented. Users can submit their innovative ideas, solutions, products, or services and provide information about themselves, company, or organization.

Why Innovate with VA?



Work with Experts

VA brings you together with subject matter experts to support solution development.



Opportunity to Scale

VA offers the opportunity for solutions to reach over 100 national medical centers.



Exposure to Target Market

VA puts you in direct contact with end-users eager to test and provide valuable feedback.



Access to Data

VA facilitates access to synthetic datasets that can be the foundation of innovation.



Collaborate on an idea or innovation at any stage.

Leverage VA data to discover health insights.

Find successful VA innovations for your own organization.

Engage with VA's Innovation Community.

YOUR MARKET-READY PRODUCTS AND SERVICES COULD HELP VA ACHIEVE OUR MISSION OF SUPPORTING VETERANS AND THEIR FAMILIES



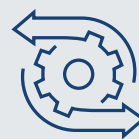
REACH

VA's logistical requirements span the entirety of the U.S. and its territories. VA's Office Acquisition, Logistics, and Construction works closely with frontline VA teams to purchase products and services through appropriate contracting venues.



DIVERSITY

VA is committed to promoting equity amongst its solution providers by working with a wide range of business types, sizes, industries, and socio-economic designations. Over 70% of VA's contracts for goods and services are dedicated to small business categories such as Veterans and Small Disadvantaged Businesses.



PROCESS

All prospective and existing Vendors are invited to find opportunities for procurement and submit information about their products and services to inform our market research. Pathfinder can also guide you to existing opportunities through acquisition platforms.

Have more questions or don't know where to start? Visit the links below for more information:

- [Pathfinder](#) | [Pathfinder.va.gov](https://pathfinder.va.gov)
- [Learn more about Selling](#) | VA Pathfinder
- [Innovate Q&A](#) | VA Pathfinder



FUNDING & GRANTS ^A

Research funding and grant opportunities

Development Time:



**6-12
Months**

Organizational Level:



Community

Funding and Grant Options

- How to find grants? [Grant Programs | Grants.gov](#)
- [Candid.org](#) maintains a comprehensive database on U.S. and global grant-makers and their funding opportunities.
- [Candid's Funding Information Network](#) facilitates access to grant resources and publications to under-resourced entities and populations.
- Try using the [Community Foundation Locator](#) to find a grant-making foundation in your region!



What is the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA)?

The [CFDA](#) is a comprehensive list of federal assistance programs and details the federal grants, loans, scholarships, counseling and other assistance programs available to the American public.



Obtaining funding and grants can be challenging, however funding is often the most critical element to sustain a successful Veteran community coalition. Securing multiple funding sources reduce the coalition's risks when grants and other programs expire.

Finding Grant Programs

If you are just entering the realm of grants and government funding, it can feel overwhelming trying to find the right program for you or your organization. When considering grants, these programs can be broadly categorized as those awarded by the Federal Government and those awarded by non-federal entities. Within these two categories are a variety of funding sources and program types.

1) Federal Grants, Funding and Benefit Programs

To sort through the Federal grant programs, the authoritative source is the **Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA)**. This catalog lists all of the available funding programs to all levels of government, nonprofit organizations, for-profit businesses, and other eligible entities. Searching 'grants' within Grants.gov allows you to search, filter, and apply for specific opportunities to receive funding from one of these programs.

2) Non-Federal Grant Program

There are a large number of nonprofit organizations and for-profit businesses that also provide grants or other types of funding assistance.



Learn more by watching this Webinar!
Grants for Organizations Serving Veterans

<https://www.learngrantwriting.org/blog/grants-for-veterans>



EVALUATION METRICS & **DEFINING SUCCESS**

B I A

Development Time:



On-going

Organizational Level:



**Community
Organization**



**A framework for
performance evaluation**



What is performance measurement?

Performance measurement is an ongoing process that monitors and reports on a program's progress and accomplishments by using pre-selected performance measures. Program evaluation, however, uses measurement and analysis to answer specific questions about how well a program is achieving its outcomes and why.



Tips for Measuring Success

Data-driven decision-making improves our work and helps us be good stewards of the community. For each project we work on, our goal is to identify metrics we can use to determine its success and use to guide future projects.

Set SMART Goals

To measure success, you need to set goals, but not all goals are created equal. Taking the time to outline specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound goals will provide you with the foundation you need to measure the effectiveness of your project.

What Success Looks Like

Success can take many forms depending on the type of project you are submitting. A great way to start this process is to ask yourself what does success look like? Having a vision of success in mind allows you to work your way backwards through the process to identify the specific details that outline your vision of success and the call to action to achieve it.

How to Measure Success

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to measuring success. For example, a website project will yield different opportunities to measure success, such as site traffic metrics, than a photography request.

Because measuring success is tricky, we encourage you to think not only about what you hope to achieve with your project but also how it supports your goals.

Thinking along those lines allows you to get creative in ways to measure engagement, whether that is driving your target audience to a landing page, including a question or two in a survey, or simply comparing outcomes (i.e. event registrations, donations) to previous campaigns.

If measuring your success is difficult, we recommend that you revisit your project purpose and goals to see if you can make your vision of success even more specific and achievable.



COMMUNITY RESOURCES

Community Coalitions:

[Access Resources](#) to engage your Veteran community

Learn about [Proven Methods](#) to enhance your community engagement

Find local [Community Veteran Engagement Board](#) networks

Learn about establishing [Veteran Friendly Communities](#) through coalition building and CVEBs

VAntage Point—[CVEBs](#)

The Hill—[Veterans need ‘friendly’ communities to adjust to civilian life](#)

MIT Hackathons—[MakeMIT 2022](#)

Rideshare—[The Rideshare Company: Ridesharing & Commuter Programs](#)

VCP—[Veteran Community Partnerships](#)

Communication:

Subscribe to the [VA VetResources Newsletter](#)

Submit a [VA Guest Blog](#)

Submit a no-cost Veteran, family, caregiver or survivor event to [VA Mailbox](#)

Find your local [Point-of-Contact](#) at the VA

Networking:

State Departments of Veterans [Office Locations](#)

Veterans Experience Office (VEO)—[VA VEO Partnerships](#)

VA Health Related [Partnership Examples](#)

[National Resource Directory](#) | Connecting our Service Members & Veterans

Suicide Prevention Information:

PsychArmor Institute—[15 Things Veterans Want you to Know](#)

PsychArmor Institute—[S.A.V.E.](#)

Suicide Prevention Communications Toolkit—[#BeThere](#)

Suicide Prevention Communications Toolkit—[National Guard and Reserve Members](#)

PsychArmor Institute—[S.A.V.E.](#)

Innovation:

[VA's Suicide Prevention Grand Challenge](#)

Visit [Challenge.gov](#) and [Subscribe](#) to receive information about prize competitions

[Federal Register](#)

Resources for Public Solvers: [Resources](#)

[VA Federal Advisory Committees](#)

Learn more about the [VHA Innovation Ecosystem](#)

[GSA Schedule](#)

Collaboration:

What is a [VEAC and VetXL event](#)?

[VEACs](#) help those across the country

[Locate local VA Resources here](#)

What is the [Mayor's/Governor's Challenge](#)?

Grants:

How to find grants? [Grant Programs](#) | [Grants.gov](#)

[Candid.org](#) database

[Candid's Funding Information Network](#)

Use the [Community Foundation Locator](#)

[CFDA](#) comprehensive list of federal assistance programs

Non-Profits:

Donorbox Blog—[The Complete Guide to Registering a Nonprofit](#)

YouTube—[How to Start a Nonprofit Organization—501\(c\)\(3\) Organization](#)

Donorbox.org—[How to Start a 501\(c\)\(3\)—Ultimate Guide to Registering a 501\(c\)\(3\) Nonprofit](#)

IRS.gov—[Exemption Requirements—501\(c\)\(3\) Organization](#)

[501\(c\)\(3\) Organization Definition](#)

Bob Woodruff Foundation—[Determining the Right Data Tool for Your Community-Based Partnership](#)

CONTACTS & REFERENCES



If you want more information on VA partner activities, communications, or to engage in a partnership with the VA, please email VAVEOCommunications@va.gov.



Send your request for VEAC to:
Vet-FriendlyCommunities@va.gov

Community Playbook References

[Driving Community Impact Executive Summary](#)—syracuse.edu

[IVMF-Opinion-Sea of Goodwill.pdf](#)—syracuse.edu

Learn more about Bob Woodruff [Grants](#) and the [Got Your 6 Network](#)

Additional VA Contact Information

Visit our website [VA.gov](https://va.gov)

[VA events calendar](#)

VA



**U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs**

Veterans Experience
Office

Download the **VA Welcome Kit** www.va.gov/welcome-kit/
Subscribe to **#VetResources** www.va.gov/vetresources/
Veterans Crisis Line: Dial 988, then Press 1, **Chat**, or Text 838255
The one number to reach VA: 1-800-MyVA411